

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USUN NEW YORK 2412

USCINCEUR

S E C R E T BEIRUT 7786

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PINT LE SY

SUBJ: PROBLEM OF FORMING NEW CABINET

DEPT ALSO PASS UNINST CAIRO

REF: BEIRUT 7412(NOTAL)

SUMMARY: STRUGGLE TP PUT TOGETHER ACCEPTABLE CABINET HAS
PREOCCUPIED PRESIDENT FRANGIE AND TOP GOVT AND POLITICAL FIGURES
FOR PAST TEN DAYS. TRADITIONAL RIVALRIES AND MANEUVERINGS OF
LEBANESE POLITICIANS HAVE REEMERGED AND THERE IS CONTINUING
BLATANT SYRIAN INTERFERENCE IN LEBANESE AFFAIRS. PRESTIGE OF
LEFTIST LEADER KAMAL JUMBLATT HAS SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED DUE

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TO SYRIAN, FEDAYEEN AND SUNNI SUPPORT. THIS FACT ADN GROWING
CONCERN OVER LONG LAST EFFECTS OF INACTIVITY BY GOL WHICH

DATES BACK TO ISRAEL RAID ON APRIL 10 APPEAR HAVE OPENED WAY FOR PARTICIPATION BY JUMBLATT'S GROUP IN ANY NEW CABINET, ALTHOUGH JUMBLATT UNLIKELY BE MINISTERIAL DUE TO STRONG OPPOSITION FORM RIGHT. IT UNCERTAIN WHEN CABINET WILL BE FORMED AND POSSIBLE THAT SOLH COULD BE FORCED ABANDON HIS EFFORTS AND MAKE WAY FOR ANOTHER CANDIDATE. END SUMMARY.

1. IMMEDIATELY AFTER BEING NAMED ON JUNE 21ST TAKIEDDIN SOLH WAS WARMLY WELCOMED BY ALL POLITICAL TENDENCIES IN LEBANON AS WELL AS BY FEDAYEEN, SYRIANS, ETC. HE BRAVELY ANNOUNCED THAT FORMATION CABINET EXPECTED WITHIN FORTY-EIGHT HOURS AND BEGAN CONSULTATIONS. RIGHT AWAY HE RAN INTO MAJOR PROBLEM WHICH HAS CONTINUED BLOCK HIS BEST EFFORTS FORM CABINET: DEMAND BY LEBANESE LEFTIST LEADER KAMAL JUMBLATT THAT HE BE NAMED MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND THAT SOMEONE CONGENIAL TO HIM BE NAMED MINISTER OF DEFENSE. JUMBLATT'S DEMAND WAS SUPPORTED BY SYRIAN SPOKESMAN (E.G. SA'IQA LEADER ZOHEIR MOHSEN) BY FEDAYEEN AND BY AMY SUNNI MOSLEM LEADERS (EXCEPTING SAEB SALAM WHO INITIALLY REMAINED SILENT AND THEN CAME OUT AGAINST IDEA). JUMBLATT STATED THAT ONLY HIS PRESENCE AT INTERIOR WOULD ALLOW NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN GOL AND FEDAYEEN AND ALLOW SYRIAN-LEBANESE BORDER TO BE REOPENED

2. REACTION TO JUMBLATT DEMANDS WAS QUICK IN COMING FROM MAJOR CHRISTIAN LEADER PIERRE GEYMADEL (PHALANGE) AND CAMILLE CHAMOUN WHO LET IT BE KNOWN THEY CATEGORICALLY OPPOSED. GEYMADEL REFUSED INVITATION TO JOIN CABINET AS COUNTERWEIGHT TO JUMBLATT. WE UNDERSTAND PRESIDENT FRANGIE JUST AS CATEGORICALLY OPPOSED TO JUMBLATT AS INTERIOR ALTHOUGH HE TAKING PUBLIC ATTITUDE OF NON-INTERFERENCE WITH DUE POLITICAL PROCESS, SAYING HE COULD ACCEPT WHOMEVER NAMED BY SOLH PROVIDED ASSEMBLY VOTED CONFIDENCE IN HIM. LEFTIST GROUPS AND SUNNI MOSLEMS (EXCEPTING SALAM) HAVE ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS RESTATED THEIR INSISTENCE ON JUMBLATT WHILE SOME 65 DEPUTIES (MOSTLY CHRISTIAN AND INCLUDING ARMENIANS) HELD INFORMAL MEETING AT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON JULY 27 TO LET IT BE KNOWN JUMBLATT COULD NOT GET VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. THEY ESPECIALLY UPSET AT JUMBLATT-SYRIA LINK. ON JULY 28 SOLH CAME CLOSE TO FORMING CABINET

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WITHOUT JUMBLATT, HOWEVER, RAPED INTERVENTION BY SYRIA (IN PERSON ZOHEIR MOHSEN) AND SUNNI LEADER RACHID KARAME (FORMER PRIME MINISTER FROM TRIPOLI) AND SUNNI GRAND MUFTI HASSAN KHALED SUCCEEDED IN PERSUADING SOLH TO RENOUNCE IDEA OF CABINET WITHOUT JUMBLATT. REACTING TO THIS, CHAMOUN PROPOSED THAT SAEB SALAM FORM CABINET AND SOLH BE DROPPED. SAEB SALAM DENOUNCED JUMBLATT AS WELL AS INTERFERENCE BY GRAND MUFTI IN POLITICS.

3. THE TEMPORARY UNITY OF ALL SUNNI LEADERS IN OPPOSITION TO

AMIN EL HAFEZ HAS DISAPPEARED IN FAVOR OF RETURN TO TRADITIONAL RIVALRIES BETWEEN SAEB SALAM (AND CAMILLE CHAMOUN) ON ONE HAND AND RACHID KARAME PLUS ANTI-SALAM BEIRUT SUNNIS (AND KAMAL JUMBLATT) ON OTHER. NEVERTHELESS, JUMBLATT HAS SKILLFULLY USED INTERNAL POLITICAL CRISES WHICH HAS EXISTED SINCE APRIL 10, AS WELL AS HIS GOOD RELATIONS WITH SYRIA AND THE FEDAYEEN, TO STRENGTHEN HIS PERSONAL POSITION AND THAT OF LOOSE GROUPSING OF LEBANESE LEFTIST WHICH HE HEADS. HE HAS LINED U STRONG SUNNI SUPPORT AND HIS MAJOR RIGHT-WING OPPONENTS SUCH AS CHAMOUN AND GEMAYEL SEEM PREPARED TO SEE HIS GROUP(IF NOT JUMBLATT IN PEROSN) HOLD ONE OR EVEN TWO SEAT IN ANY NEW CABINET WHICH MAY BE FORMED. PRESIDENT FRANGIE ALSO APPEARS READY ACCEPT SOME SUCH COMPROMISE WITH JUMBLATT IF ONLY TO GET GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONING AGAIN AFTER VACUUM OF ALMOST THREE MONTHS. ALTHOUGH JUMBLATT AND HIS SUPPORTERS ARE SHORT ON TOTAL VOTES IN LEBANESE ASSEMBLY(PROBABLY LESS THAN ONE THRID) THE PRESENT REAL POLITICAL EQUATION IS SO BALANCED THAT THEY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BLOCK CABINET ALIGNMENTS THEY; DO NOT LIKE AS EFFECTIVELY AS THOSE WHO OPPOSE JUMBLATT AND HAVE BEEN IN SUPPORT OF FRANGIE (AND PREVIOUS SAEB SALAM CABINETS), ALTHOUGH LATTER HAVE TWICE AS MANY VOTES.

4. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHO WILL SUCCEED IN FORMING NEW CABINET, WHEN IT WILL BE FORMED AND WHO MEMBERS WILL BE. THIS COULD TAKE PLACE UNDER TAKIEDDINE SOLH TODAY OR TOMORROW, OR IT COULD DRAG ON FOR WEEKS WITH SOMEONE ELSE BEING NAMED TO TRYWHERE SOLH FAILED. WHEN CABINET HAS BEEN NAMED AND APPROVED WE WILL PROVIDE OUR ASSESSMENT OF WHAT EFFECT IT LIABLE HAVE ON LEBANESE POLICIES IN SUCH KEY AREAS AS RELATIONS BETWEEN GOL AND FADAYEEN AND BETWEEN LEBANON AND OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES. US AND USSR. HOWEVER, TREND TOWARD SOME COMPROMISE WITH LEFT AND FEDAYEEN

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NOTED ABOVE AND REPORTED OUR 7023 IS ALREADY APPARENT.
HOUGHTON

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED CAIRO.

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